

Today on Cambridge Common: "Timber! . . ."

Michael Brandon <mjbrandon@gmail.com>

Tue 4/7/2015 8:45 AM

City Clerk Agenda

To: Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

 1 attachment (121 KB)

Cambridge Common Project MEPA comments (tree concerns).pdf;

To: Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods <association-of-cambridge-neighborhoods@googlegroups.com>, Cambridge City Council c/o City Clerk <donnalopez@cambridgema.gov>, City Councilors <council@cambridgema.gov>

Starting today, absent a last-minute change of heart by Cambridge City Manager Richard Rossi (rrossi@cambridgema.gov, 617-349-4300), many of the mature trees that enrich the urban environment and provide the Cambridge Common's 10,000 daily park lovers, tourists, sports enthusiasts, playground users, dog walkers, pedestrians, joggers, and cyclists with lush, colorful foliage during most of the year will be deliberately removed. (See [tree canopy photos here](#).)

I'm hoping that a last-minute effort by Craig Kelley and his eight colleagues on the Cambridge City Council might be possible to save at least some of the 21 targeted trees, though that now seems unlikely (see correspondence below). If you share my concerns, however, perhaps a quick email or phone call to these elected officials will prompt a few leaders to step forward and act before it's too late. Their contact info can be found at [this link](#).

Thanks, and sorry for any cross-postings and duplications.

Michael Brandon
North Cambridge

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michael Brandon <mjbrandon@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 6, 2015 at 4:40 PM
Subject: Re: FW: Update from Mass DOT for Cambridge Common reconstruction project
To: Craig Kelley <ckelley@cambridgema.gov>

Hi, Craig--

Thanks for passing along CDD planner Bill Deignan's attempt to preempt the public outcry that will probably ensue when the contractors start felling mature trees on Cambridge Common tomorrow [i.e., Tuesday, April 7]. Your note prompts a few [questions](#):

Beyond the nutty rationale for deliberately diminishing the city's tree canopy in apparent contravention of express environmental policy, Mr. Deignan says below that approximately 21 mature trees were "permitted" for removal during the poorly publicized multiyear design process. Why is he vague about the exact number? And are you aware of any such tree demolition permits having been issued by a federal, state, or local governmental agency?

I know that Commonwealth officials declined to require an Environment Impact Report, close scrutiny, and project approval under the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act. Moreover, as far as I can tell, the City Arborist has not conducted a Chapter 87 or similar tree removal hearing for these public trees, and neither the City Council nor its subcommittees have ever conducted a formal public hearing focusing on this multimillion-dollar project. Please correct me if I'm wrong.

By the way, contrary to your suggestion below, the Cambridge Common / Flagstaff Park Project was jointly planned and jointly funded by MassDOT and the City of Cambridge with the approval of the full City Council, which unanimously authorized the City Manager to borrow \$2.18 million to help pay for the imminent deforesting of the main entrance to Common (among other so-called improvements).

Too bad that Cambridge elected officials expressed more concern about saving Belmont's privately owned Silver Maple Forest than the city's Norway Maple Grove and other healthy trees that have graced our most historic and heavily used public open space for generations,

Michael

P.S. Given the longstanding, widespread demand for permanent public toilet facilities on Cambridge Common, [why didn't the City Council ensure that the necessary funding, site planning, design infrastructure, and maintenance program for such a comfort station were included in this major project?](#)

P.P.S. [Was a public art component incorporated pursuant to the Public Development Arts Ordinance?](#) I find no information about this on the City's Web site and look forward to hearing back from you.

On Sat, Apr 4, 2015 at 8:46 AM, Kelley, Craig <ckelley@cambridgema.gov> wrote:

Folks:

I am forwarding this email about the Cambridge Common project. You might have noticed that it's started up again, having been shut down due, according to the attached notice, severe winter conditions. You can learn more about the project, which includes Flagstaff Park, a multi-use path and associated roadwork, on the City's webpage [here](#).

The project is going to take down about 21 trees this coming week and it's going to look somewhat denuded after that. I don't particularly like that part of the plan, but they did go through a fairly involved discussion about that part of the project so, while I may wish they'd kept more trees, I can't claim to be surprised. There will be more trees planed later on, along with other major landscaping changes involving bushes and fences and so forth.

If you have specific questions about this project, please contact Donny Daily at Donny.Dailey2@dot.state.ma.us. This is a state DOT project, not a City one, which is why Donny is the contact person and not someone from the City.

Thanks a lot.

And Happy Easter!

Craig

All emails to and from this email address are subject to the Public Records Law and may be made available to members of the public. Anything you do not want subject to that law should be sent to me at Craig@CraigKelley.org.

From: Tomeu, Ini
Sent: Thursday, April 02, 2015 2:20 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Rossi, Rich; Peterson, Lisa; Gianetti, Lee
Subject: Update from Mass DOT for Cambridge Common reconstruction project

Councillors, please see attached update from Mass DOT for Cambridge Common reconstruction project and additional note on this project below.

Ini Tomeu, Public Information Officer

Note From Bill Deignan, Transportation Planner, Community Development:

Attached is a general notice from MassDOT about the spring commencement of construction in the Common itself after the substantial completion of work on Mass. Avenue and construction of the multi-use path in Flagstaff Park during the last year.

One specific, upcoming work item that I wanted to make you aware of was the removal of approximately 21 trees in the Common next week on April 7th and 8th. As you know, these trees were identified and permitted to be removed during the design process because many of them are Norway Maples in decline and others are being removed to re-open views of the

Civil War monument. The removals were reviewed by the Committee on Public Planting, were discussed during the public process and at a walk in the Common with concerned members of the public and City Council. Over 100 new trees will be planted in the Common as part of the project.

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